



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Federal Subsistence Board

1101 E Tudor Rd, MS 121
Anchorage Alaska 99503



Forest Service

Corrected - Federal Waters Within the Boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

2014 Kuskokwim Area Salmon Fishery News Release 2

Issued at: Bethel, Alaska
May 16, 2014

This is an announcement from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for subsistence fishermen in the Kuskokwim Area.

Federal Special Actions

Two Special Actions were issued at the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge this afternoon. These are restrictions to the Chinook fishery that will begin on **Tuesday, May 20th**. The first Special Action, 3KS-01-14 limits who can participate in the Chinook salmon fishery on the Kuskokwim River. Only residents of the Kuskokwim River District and members of the villages of Chefornak, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok and Kongiganek can participate in openings that *may* occur for Chinook salmon or opening that have incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. The second Special Action, 3KS-02-14 closes the Chinook salmon fishery in the Kuskokwim River drainage to all user groups and limits gillnets that may be used to set gillnets with 4-inch or less stretch mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length. It also limits hook and line gear to equipment that does not target Chinook salmon. For instance, using 4 pound test line on a rod designed for 15 pounds while using small spinners is gear designed for grayling, Dolly Varden, rainbow trout, etc. Compare this to using a rod designed for 40 pounds, using 30 pound test line, and large hooks, which could be construed as targeting Chinook salmon. Chinook salmon incidentally harvested in the gillnet fishery may be kept; however, Chinook salmon incidentally harvested using all other gear types must be immediately released. Information about the timing and management of the dip net fishery on the Kuskokwim River will announced at a later date

Biological Rationale

Since 2010, the Kuskokwim River has experienced poor Chinook returns and 2013 was the lowest return on record. The 2014 Chinook forecast is for a return of 94,000 fish (range of 71,000–117,000). The drainage-wide escapement goal is 65,000–120,000. If the 2014 return is within the forecast then there would be enough fish to meet escapement goals and provide for very limited Chinook subsistence harvest. The majority of escapement goals were not met in 2013 and all weir assessment projects had the lowest on record. Given consecutive years of low Chinook returns and non-achievement of escapement goals conservation measures are warranted.

Affected Area**Kuskokwim River Mouth to Tuluksak: Sections 1 and 2 (Federal Special Action)**

Effective 12:01 a.m., Tuesday, May 20, 2014 Chinook salmon fishing in the Kuskokwim River drainage is closed to all user groups. Gillnets are restricted to set gillnets with 4-inch or less mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length in Salmon Conservation Sections 1 and 2. Subsistence fishing with dipnet will adhere to State fishing schedules (AS 16.05.060). Chinook salmon incidentally caught in gillnets may be retained. Chinook salmon incidentally caught using all other gear types must be immediately released. The area covered by this action is defined as that portion of the Kuskokwim River and its tributaries upstream from the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge border at the mouth of the Kuskokwim, described by a line from a point on the west shore 5.1 miles south-southwest of Popkamiut (approximately 59° 59' 57.8198 -162° 30' 24.47688) across to a point on the east shore 3.4 miles south-southeast of the mouth of Kuskokwak Creek (approximately 59° 59.57.14979 -162° 11' 14.92507), upriver on the Kuskokwim to a line between ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately half a mile upstream of the Tuluksak River mouth. This section includes the slough (locally known as Utak Slough) on the northwest side of the Kuskokwim River adjacent to the Tuluksak River mouth. Excluded waters are non-salmon spawning tributaries: those portions of Kinak, Kialik, Tagayarak, Johnson and Gweek rivers more than 100 yards upstream from the mouth of these rivers, are open with any mesh size gillnet and are not affected by these closures.

For additional information concerning this news release:

USFWS: Brian McCaffery 907-543-1014

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